

## 5 Reasons to Pray for the Souls in Purgatory

*“Purgatory shows God’s great mercy and washes away the defects of those who long to become one with Him.”*

– St. Josemaria Escriva



When is the last time you prayed for the Holy Souls? If you’re like many Catholics, the answer is not recently. The souls in purgatory are too often forgotten by Catholics, and I fear this is often out of a misguided desire to not seem medieval (as if that were a bad thing), superstitious, or worse yet, ecumenically insensitive.

Regardless of the reasons for its neglect, it is the constant teaching of the Church that purgatory is quite real and that there are countless souls there in need of our prayers. [The] point here is not prove that purgatory exists or to provide a theological basis for its existence. Rather, it is to urge you to pray for the Church suffering.

**Here are 5 reasons to pray for the relief of our brothers and sisters in purgatory.**

**1. The pain is real** - The suffering of purgatory is likened by the saints to burning in a blazing fire. In

fact, some saints have even said that the pain of purgatory is not all that different from the suffering of hell. One of the chief sources of the pain is the fact that salvation has been obtained, and yet one cannot immediately enjoy its consolations. This delay of the enjoyment of heaven leads to a spiritual agony of sorts. St. Thomas Aquinas explains it like this:

*The more one longs for a thing, the more painful does deprivation of it become. And because after this life, the desire for God, the Supreme Good, is intense in the souls of the just (because this impetus toward him is not hampered by the weight of the body, and that time of enjoyment of the Perfect Good would have come) had there been no obstacle; the soul suffers enormously from the delay.*

So the souls in purgatory are suffering in a very real and painful way, a way we cannot fully comprehend. We have the ability to help them and relieve them by our prayers and actions.

**2. They are our relatives** - Many of us have blood relations—grandmothers, aunts and uncles, and parents—who have died and are likely in purgatory. We should be praying for their souls out of love for them. But even if we have no dead relatives that we know of, the souls in purgatory are still our spiritual brothers and sisters. We are related by baptism into Christ, and this familial relationship should spur us to act on their behalf.

**3. You will probably go there** - Let's be honest, most of us are simply not holy enough to bypass purgatory, and the vast majority of us will experience its cleansing fires. If you were suffering intensely, wouldn't you want someone to offer you relief? Yes, you would. Praying for the Holy Souls, then, is a fulfillment of the Golden Rule given to us by Christ—to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. If you feel an aversion to praying for the poor souls, then simply remember what you would wish if you were in their position.

**4. It will bring you joy** - Praying for the souls in purgatory is not without its rewards. Can you imagine the joy of meeting brothers and sisters in Christ one day in heaven and realizing that you helped them with your humble prayers? “As we enter Heaven we will see them, so many of them coming towards us and thanking us,” Archbishop Fulton Sheen once said, “We will ask, who they are, and they will say a poor soul you prayed for in Purgatory.” The small sacrifice of time we made in this life will all be worth it when we see the faces of those who benefited from our prayers.

**5. It isn't that hard** - Praying for the souls in purgatory is quite easy, so easy in fact that we have no excuse for not doing it. A prayer for the Holy Souls can be as simple as the short Requiem Aeternam prayer: “Eternal rest, grant unto him/her O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him/her. May s/he rest in peace. Amen.” We can also add a brief petition to our daily meal prayer: “Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts...And may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.” Why wouldn't we pray these simple prayers daily?

Two effective ways to pray for the souls in purgatory are praying the Divine Mercy chaplet for them and remembering them in your Rosary intentions. The Divine Mercy Chaplet and Rosary require a time commitment of approximately 10 and 20 minutes. Even praying these powerful prayers once a week for the Holy Souls isn't asking that much considering the benefit it brings to your spiritual family members.

Finally, one can have a Mass said for the poor souls. Mass stipends are usually \$10, the cost of [a at a coffee shop]. This merciful almsgiving is pleasing to God and hardly burdensome to us.

## **Get Praying**

Purgatory is nothing other than an experience of the burning and purifying mercy of God, a purifying love that consumes all defects with its intensity. While it may be strange for us to think of love and mercy as inflicting pain, this is the reality of purgatory.

We have the power to help our suffering friends and bring them relief. To do so is an act of mercy and self-giving love. The sacrifice it requires of us is minimal, and yet the rewards are great. [During this month, dedicated to the Holy Souls in Purgatory], let us renew our commitment to praying for our brothers and sisters who suffer in the purifying love of God.

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*Requiem Aeternam dona eis, Domine  
Et lux perpetua luceat eis:  
Requiescant in pace. Amen.*

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